

## THE GENRE OF Q&A SESSIONS OF ORAL PRESENTATIONS DELIVERED BY STUDENTS ENROLLED IN ENGLISH FOR WORKPLACE COMMUNICATION

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**ABSTRACT :** This study is to seek out the structure of the moves utilised by students in Q&A sessions of oral presentations and the differences between the moves utilized by FP and FPPSM students enrolled in *English for Workplace Communication*. The Q&A sessions of the oral presentations of 44 third year students enrolled in the preceding subject from the two faculties in UTM were observed. The Q&A sessions were recorded and then transcribed and analysed to work out the moves. It was found that there was a specific structure of moves utilised by students in Q&A sessions of oral presentations. Some differences were found between the moves in Q&A sessions of FP students and those of FPPSM students. The structure of the moves in Q&A sessions needs to be explained to the students so that they are aware of the appropriate moves to be utilised during the Q&A sessions.

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Keyword: FPPSM-Fakulti Pembangunan dan Pengurusan Sumber Manusia, OP-Oral Presentation, OPs Oral-Prsentations

### INTRODUCTION

A newspaper article (New Straits Times, April 2008) reported that the local graduates in Malaysia could not secure jobs as they were not up to the par in terms of English communication skills. These students may have achieved first class degree but they still have problems in communicating in English. Because of this, the credibility of local higher institutions is at stake as the public assume that the problem started because these institutions do not give their students sufficient practice in English.

This has caused many parties to be blamed. However, blaming one another will not solve any problem unless these parties cooperate to come up with the solution that can benefit all. Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM) has taken several steps to help these students to acquire English communication skills. Specific courses such as Effective Oral Communication Skills, students are given the chance to practise communicating in English.

## **STATEMENT OF PROBLEM**

One common problem of communication found in local higher institutions is, the students are not able to participate actively in dialogues when they attend seminars or conferences. The students did not ask questions when they were given the chance. Students dread question and answer sessions of student oral presentations as the speakers feared of being asked questions meanwhile the audience, do not know how to ask questions and will just keep quiet. When the students start working, they will find that the skill of asking is very important because besides delivering presentations they will also need to be able to answer and ask the questions. Good impression is very important in career life and this skill is very important to maintain.

## **OBJECTIVES**

- 1) To describe the structure of the moves found in Q&A sessions of student OPs.
- 2) To compare the moves found in Q&A sessions of OPs delivered by students in FP and those delivered by students in FPPSM.

## **SIGNIFICANT OF RESEARCH**

This research will be an advantage for students to participate actively in Q&A sessions of seminars, oral presentations and also interactions in everyday life. With the knowledge of the moves utilized in Q&A sessions, students can be more confident to participate actively in the sessions. It can also be an advantage for lecturers by giving the input on the moves found in Q&A sessions. With this input, lecturers will be able to use it to teach students the right way to participate in Q&A sessions.

## **SCOPE OF RESEARCH**

This research will investigate the structure of the moves found in the Q&A sessions of student oral presentations delivered by students enrolled in English for Workplace Communication (UHB 3022) offered by the Department of Modern Languages, Faculty of Management and Human Resource Development, UTM Skudai, Johor. This research will not include the moves and elements found in the introduction, body and conclusion of the oral presentations.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Sample and Population**

The population of this research included all students enrolled in English for Workplace Communication (UHB 3022) offered by the Department of Modern Languages, Faculty of Management and Human Resource Development, UTM Skudai, Johor. However, the research only observed and recorded two classes as all the classes conducted oral presentations in the same week.

### **Research Instrument**

The researcher made use of one instrument for this study which was transcribed Q&A sessions (Appendix A and Appendix B). There were eight transcribed Q&A sessions that were used in the analysis.

The Q&A sessions of the OPs by the students were recorded and transcribed. The sessions were transcribed according to the standard convention of transcription. The transcriptions were the main instrument of this study. The transcribed sessions can be seen in Appendix A and B.

## RESULTS

### Sessions of FP Students' Oral Presentations

For FP students, there were four Q&A sessions recorded. Each group's oral presentation was followed with a Q&A session. In each session, a minimum of four questions were asked and answered. Therefore, for each session only four questions were analyzed in order to conduct a standard analysis. For each session, the four questions were analyzed in a table in order to determine the general sequence of the moves utilized by each group. The same step was repeated for the next three groups. After this analysis, the general sequence of moves for each group was organized into a table as shown below.

Table 1 : The Moves Found in Each Group (FP)

FP 1	FP2	FP3	FP4
Making transition	Making transition	Making transition	Making transition
-	Inviting questions	-	-
-	-	Stating number of questions	Stating number of questions
FP 1	FP2	FP3	FP4
Introducing questioner	Introducing questioner	-	-
Structuring move	Structuring move	Structuring move	Structuring move
Questioning move	Questioning move	Questioning move	Questioning move
Thanking the questioner	Thanking the questioner	-	Thanking the questioner
Responding move	Responding move	Responding move	Responding move
Expanding move	Expanding move	Expanding move	Expanding move
Reminding speaker of the question	-	-	-
-	Confirming that question is answered	-	-
-	Inviting next question	-	Inviting next question

Each group had a transitional phase in their Q&A session where they indicated the end of their presentation. However, only FP2 proceeded with the move of inviting questions from the audience. In Q&A session for FP3 and FP4, the audience stated the number of questions they were going to ask before asking the question. Next, two sessions saw audience introducing themselves before asking the question. As it was a business presentation, they introduced themselves as representative from their company. They proceeded with the structuring move and then they asked their question (questioning move).

For every group, one of the speaker responded to the questions (responding move) and proceeded in explaining more on their responses (expanding move) by giving examples, assurances etc. There was one member of the audience in Q&A session for FP1 who reminded the speakers of the question that she asked (reminding speaker of the question). Only one of the groups, FP2 confirmed with the questioner whether the response given answered her question. Speakers from FP2 and FP4 invited other questions from the audience after they finished answering the questions.

Each group signalled the end of their presentation as the start of Q&A session as they are experienced in delivering oral presentations. Therefore, they are familiar with the basic moves of OP. However, only one of the groups invited questions from the audience. This might happen because of the presence of the lecturer as the chairman for the presentations where they assumed that the audience will ask questions even though they did not invite the questions.

Most of the audience members introduced themselves before asking questions as this move was required by the chairman. However, some of them did not utilize this move. All the questioners utilized structuring move when they were asking question. Structuring move is where the questioner gave context or situation for the questions they asked.

Most of the speakers thanked the questioners for the question before answering it. This can be seen from the table where speakers from three groups utilized this move. They responded to the questions and each time they would expand their responses in order to make the audience more convinced of their product. However, some of the speakers strayed from the responses that he or she should give and that was when one of the questioner from F1 reminded the speaker of her actual action. Speakers from FP2 would confirm with the questioner whether the responses given answered their question. This move may have been utilised because it may seem that the questioner was not satisfied with their answer. However, none of the audience members verified this but agreed that their questions were answered. Speakers from F2 would always invite other questions after they had finished answering questions.

So, it can be concluded that the structure of the moves in FP students' Q&A sessions is as illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2 : The structure of the moves found in Q&A Sessions of FP Students' Oral Presentations

M 1.0 Expressing transition
SM 1.1 Making transition
SM 1.2 Inviting next questions
M 2.0 Asking question
SM 2.1 Stating number of questions
SM 2.2 Introducing questioner
SM 2.3 Structuring move
SM 2.4 Questioning move
M 3.0 Answering question
SM 3.1 Thanking the questioner
SM 3.2 Responding move
SM 3.3 Expanding move
SM3.4 Reminding speaker of the question
SM 3.5 Confirming that question is answered
SM 3.6 Inviting next question

### Sessions of FPPSM Students' Oral Presentation

For FPPSM students, the same number of Q&A sessions was recorded. Therefore, the same step was taken as when FP students' Q&A sessions were analyzed. In each session, only four questions were analysed. Then, the moves found in these four questions were generalized into one common move for each group. The result is as in the following table.

Table 3 : The Moves Found in Each Group (FPPSM)

FPPSM 1	FPPSM2	FPPSM3	FPPSM4
Making transition	Making transition	Making transition	Making transition
Inviting questions	Inviting questions	Inviting questions	Inviting questions
Introducing questioner	Introducing questioner	Introducing questioner	Introducing questioner
-	-	Stating number of questions	Stating number of questions
Structuring move	-	-	-
Questioning move	Questioning move	Questioning move	Questioning move
Thanking the questioner	Thanking the questioner	Thanking the questioner	Thanking the questioner
-	-	-	Referring to Power Point slide
Responding move	Responding move	Responding move	Responding move
Expanding move	Expanding move	Expanding move	Expanding move

As can be seen from the table, the moves utilized by FPPSM students are mostly the same with those utilised by FP students. However, for FPPSM, when the questioner wanted to ask questions, he/she would introduce themselves before stating the number of questions. This move (introducing questioner) was utilized by every questioner in FPPSM Q&A sessions but it was not the same with FP where it was utilized in only two Q&A sessions. The next move (stating number of questions) it could be seen in only two Q&A sessions in FPPSM's as well as FP's OPs. There was a big difference between questioners in FPPSM's and FP's Q&A sessions when the questioners were asking questions. In FP's, the (structuring move) could be seen in each session but in FPPSM's, it could only be detected in one session. However, for the proceeding move, (questioning move), it was utilised by all questioners in every session for both FP and FPPSM OPs.

When answering questions, all the speakers in FPPSM's Q&A sessions, (thanked the questioners) for the questions before they answered the questions compared to FP's where one group did not utilize this move. Then, before answering the question, one of the speakers in FPPSM's Q&A session (referred to his/her group's Power Point slides). This move could not be seen in any FP's Q&A session. Each FPPSM group answered questions by utilising both responding and expanding move. Responding move is when the speakers answered the questions asked while expanding move is when the speakers elaborated on their answers and gave examples.

There was none of the moves utilised by FP groups after 'expanding move' that could be seen in FPPSM's Q&A sessions. These moves are '*reminding speaker of the question, confirming that question is answered and inviting next question*'. The speakers from FPPSM also did not utilise any other moves after 'expanding move'.

Each FPPSM group indicated the end of their OPs and invited for questions from the audience because they were familiar with the basic moves in Q&A sessions. They had the experience of delivering OPs and Q&A sessions after OPs and this made them utilised both moves.

The context of the OPs and Q&A sessions was the same for FP and FPPSM. Both types were business presentations and they had to introduce their company and also promote their product. Therefore, each of the questioners introduced themselves as representative from each company like the questioners in FP's Q&A sessions. This move was required by the chairman and every questioner did not forget introducing themselves unlike FP's Q&A sessions, where, in one session, the speakers did not introduce themselves. The students forgot that this was a business presentation and they assumed that the other speakers knew everyone as they were in the same class and thus, they did not introduce themselves. Then, as mentioned before, in two FPPSM Q&A sessions, the questioners stated the number of question they were going to ask after introducing themselves. This move was utilised in order to make it clear from the beginning, the number of questions they were going to ask so that the speakers would be ready and alert when they ask the questions.

Another interesting difference between FP and FPPSM Q&A sessions was on structuring move. There was only one session in FPPSM's that saw the utilisation of structuring move. As mentioned before, structuring move is where the questioners gave a context to the situation for the questions they asked. This situation may happen because of the time constraint in each session so each questioner gave a direct question without giving context. There was time constraint in FPPSM's Q&A session because there were 8 groups presenting compared to 5 groups for FP. Therefore, even though the time allocated for each group for Q&A session was the same for all groups, but there were more questions asked in FPPSM's Q&A sessions than FP's.

Similar to FP's Q&A sessions, in FPPSM's, all the speakers thanked the questioners for the questions but only one speaker in FPPSM's Q&A session that referred to the slides before answering the question. This move was utilised because the questioner asked an obvious question where the answers had been presented as part of the content of the OP. So, in order to make the answer clearer to the questioner, the speaker displayed the slides that contained the answer. Lastly, all the speakers from FP and FPPSM knew that they have to respond to questions and expand the responses in order to convince the 'customers' so that they will be interested in their product.

So, it can be concluded that the structure of the moves in FPPSM students' Q&A sessions is in the following sequence:

Table 4 : The Structure of the Moves Found in Q&A Sessions of FPPSM Students' Oral Presentations

<b>M 1.0</b> Expressing transition
SM 1.1 Making transition
SM 1.2 Inviting questions
<b>M 2.0</b> Asking question
SM 2.1 Introducing questioner
SM 2.2 Stating number of questions
SM 2.3 Structuring move
SM 2.4 Questioning move
<b>M 3.0</b> Answering question
SM 3.1 Thanking the questioner
SM 3.2 Referring to Power Point slides
SM 3.3 Responding move
SM 3.4 Expanding move

### **Differences Between the Moves Found in FP and FPPSM Students' Q&A Sessions**

In the preceding tables, it can be seen that there are differences between the structure of the moves found in FP's and FPPSM's Q&A sessions. Even though there are not many differences, these differences are significant in this research. Table 5 illustrates these differences.

The first significant difference is the number of moves utilized by FPPSM students are less than FP students. Under (M3.0 Answering Question), there were six moves utilised by FP students compared to four utilised by FPPSM. The moves utilised by FPPSM students in answering questions were the same as FP students but there were three moves that were not utilised by FPPSM students and they were (SM 3.4 Reminding speaker of the question), (SM 3.5 Confirming the question is answered) and (SM 3.6 Inviting next question). However, there was one move in answering question that was utilised by FPPSM students but not by FP students and it was (SM 3.2 Referring to Power Point slides). These differences occurred because of the difference in the field of study. FP students are trained to become teachers while FPPSM students are trained to be human resource managers, technology managers, occupational psychologist etc. Teachers are trained to ask a lot of questions in classrooms in order to test students' understanding therefore moves like (SM 3.5 Confirming question is answered) and (SM 3.6 Inviting next questions) are usual moves that were utilised in classrooms. The FP speakers had gone to their teaching practice and thus, they learned from experience that these moves are essential.

There was also one move utilised by FPPSM student but not FP students in answering question and it was (SM 3.2 Referring to Power Point slides). As mentioned before, FPPSM students are trained to be professionals like human resource managers, technology managers, occupational psychologist and also other types of professionals. Therefore, the genre of the Q&A sessions would be more



professional and formal and in professional Q&A sessions, it is normal to refer to visual aids when answering questions.

Another significant difference is that FP students stated number of questions they were going to ask before they introduce themselves in asking questions. On the other hand, FPPSM students introduced themselves before stating number of questions they were going to ask. However, it is important to note that, not all FP students stated number of questions before they ask and for the groups who did, they did not introduce themselves after stating number of question. They straightaway moved on to (SM 2.3 structuring move) and then (SM 2.4 questioning move). Meanwhile, all FPPSM sessions had students introducing themselves but only two of the sessions saw the questioners stated the number of questions after introducing themselves.

Table 5 : The Structure of the Moves Found in FP and FPPSM Students' Q&A Sessions

Faculties	FP	FPPSM
Moves	<b>1.0 Expressing Transition</b>	
Sub-moves	1.1 Making transition	1.1 Making transition
	1.2 Inviting next questions	1.2 Inviting next questions
Moves	<b>2.0 Asking Question</b>	
Sub-moves	2.1 Stating number of questions	2.1 Introducing questioner
	2.2 Introducing questioner	2.2 Stating number of questions
	2.3 Structuring move	2.3 Structuring move
	2.4 Questioning move	2.4 Questioning move
Moves	<b>3.0 Answering Question</b>	
Sub-moves	3.1 Thanking the questioner	3.1 Thanking the questioner
	3.2 Responding move	3.2 Referring to Power Point slides
	3.3 Expanding move	3.3 Responding move
	3.4 Reminding speaker of the question	3.4 Expanding move
	3.5 Confirming that question is answered	
	3.6 Inviting next question	

## CONCLUSION

### Conclusion on Findings

Based on the findings of the research, it was found that the structure of the moves found in Q&A session of student oral presentations is:

<b>M 1.0</b> Transitional phase
SM 1.1 Making transition
SM 1.2 Inviting questions
<b>M 2.0</b> Asking question
S.M 2.1 Introducing questioner
S.M 2.2 Stating number of questions
S.M 2.3 Structuring move
SM 2. 4 Questioning move
<b>M 3.0</b> Answering question
SM 3.1 Thanking the questioner
SM 3.2 Referring to Power Point slides
SM 3.3 Responding move
SM 3.4 Expanding move
SM 3.5 Reminding speaker of the question
SM 3.6 Confirming that question is answered
SM 3.7 Inviting next question

With this, it answers the first research question which is “*What is the structure of the moves found in Q&A session of student oral presentations.*” Further analysis of the transcribed Q&A sessions of FP and FPPSM student oral presentations, it was found that there were several differences in terms of moves between those two faculties and these differences answer the second research question which is “*What are the differences in moves found in Q&A session of OPs delivered by students in FP and those delivered by students in FPPSM*”. The differences are:

1. FP students utilised more moves than FPPSM students in Q&A sessions.
2. FPPSM students referred to Power Point slides when answering question.
3. FPPSM students introduced themselves before stating number of questions but it was the opposite for FP students.

Overall, the moves described by Kayfetz and Smith (1992) formed the basis of the moves in Q&A sessions as all the moves were found in the transcriptions. Hopefully, with this research, it can help to make the lecturers and also students to be aware of the moves necessary in Q&A sessions as it can help to prepare students to handle and participate in Q&A sessions later when they are working.

## Implications of Findings

Q&A sessions after each oral presentation are very important in order to help achieve the purpose of the OP. Badly handled Q&A sessions and inactive participation in the sessions can result in losing a contract, reduce credibility and many other things. Therefore, students need to be exposed with the correct and necessary moves in Q&A sessions. Some pedagogical implications in which educators can help instil these moves in students are stated below:

- a) Educators should demonstrate and provide examples of good moves in Q&A sessions so that students are clear on which moves are suitable to be utilised to make an effective Q&A session;
- b) Educators should provide more chances for students to be able to practice participating in Q&A sessions by conducting more oral presentations and ensure that Q&A sessions are made compulsory;
- c) Educators should focus on the different moves used by the professionals in different fields of work as different genres of OPs will result in different moves in Q&A sessions.

Students should also have their own initiative in discovering the moves in Q&A sessions of the field of work they will be participating after graduation. Experience in Q&A sessions in universities may not be enough due to time limitation. In addition, the presentation genres might not be the same as those in actual work environments. Therefore, they should investigate the right ways in handling Q&A sessions and also participating actively in these sessions.

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